

P O S T -

HYBERNATION

I S S U E !

Report #10

MCC Peace Section

Task Force on Women in Church and Society

March - April, 1976

The editors of this occasional newsletter sort of got buried under mounds of Canadian snow! But we're happy to report that a lot of solid work has been done this winter - by members of the Task Force and others - to sensitize various of our church institutions to women's concerns. We'll have more to report on that after our next Task Force meeting the end of March.

The main thing we want to do in this Report is throw out some topics for your further consideration - the Total Woman phenomenon, our experiences as women in the working world, even the politics of rape. We also want to make brief mention of conferences past, events to come, and worthy books and other resources.

But mostly we want to hear from you! How do these concerns intersect with your life? Page 3 is our "Reaction Page" - but if we need to use pages 4 - 8 as well, we'll be glad to! See our back page for further details.

Sue Steiner

Margaret L. Reimer, editors

P.S. We'll not make the common error of overlooking the clerical help. Many thanks to Sam Steiner, our typist for this issue.

EVANGELICAL WOMEN STRUGGLE WITH ISSUES

Both Herta Funk, director of women's concerns for the General Conference Mennonite Church, and Katie Funk Wiebe, task force member, reported on the Evangelical Women's Caucus held in Washington, D.C. during the American Thanksgiving weekend.

Thirty-five Mennonite women (one tenth of the total group) were in attendance.

Resource persons like Letha Scanzoni, who spoke on egalitarian marriage, locked horns with women of more conservative bent who felt that 'feminist' and 'Christian' were mutually exclusive terms. Virginia

more

Ramey Mollenkott, professor of English, raised some hackles with her hard-hitting, radical exposition of biblical feminism. Twenty-five different workshops covered various topics from politics to marriage.

Two resolutions were passed: 1) support for the Equal Rights Amendment as 'consistent with Christian convictions,' and 2) an expression of solidarity with the 2,000 Roman Catholic women meeting simultaneously in Detroit on the ordination of women.

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IWY WEEK AT GOSHEN COLLEGE

December 1-4, 1975 was women's week at Goshen College. The program included films, exhibits and discussions but the main input came from a series of chapel presentations during the week. Luann Habegger Martin spoke on women and world development. Dorothy and John Nyce led a service on partnership and Janet Umble Reedy spoke on women and peace.

Persons interested in obtaining copies of the presentations or evaluations of the films used should write to Dorothy Yoder Nyce, c/o Goshen College.

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ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE UNITES WESTERN CANADIANS

An ecumenical group of women from the four western provinces met in Saskatoon, Sask. October 17-19, 1975 for an inspiring time of study, sharing and planning on a variety of topics related to women and the church. The event, the first of its kind, was sponsored by a new organization called Canadian Women and Religion.

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SEMINARS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

A seminar back in early November at Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Va., brought 50 persons together to study male-female relationships in church and society. A quote from one speaker: "Stranger, there are no paths here. Paths are made by walking."

Meetings on similar topics were also held at the Bethany Mennonite Church in Freeman, S.D. January 16-17 and Camp Men-O-Lan in Pennsylvania January 23-24. David Schroeder of Winnipeg was the main resource person for both.

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BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND RESOURCES

Women and the Church: Resources

Available from Women's Concerns, Commission on Education, Box 347, Newton, Kansas 67114 for 30 cents each

A Bibliography on Women and the Church
Compiled by a group of Saskatoon women in connection with Canadian Women and Religion, 1332 Osler St., Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0V2. An extensive 66-page work published in 1975

Selected Bibliography on the Role of Women in the Church

Put out by the Faith and Life Commission of the Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church. (Printed in The Christian Leader, 135 North Main St., Hillsboro, Kansas, July 23, 1974)

Women in the Church

A study guide available from the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, Mennonite Church, Box 513, Goshen, Indiana.

Study Guide on women in the Bible and early Anabaptism as well as lesson helps for the book All We're Meant to Be. From COE, Newton, Kansas.

REACTION PAGE:
TOTAL WOMAN

Editor's Note: Our "reaction page" this month comes out of the Total Woman seminar held in Goshen, Ind. earlier this winter. Several Mennonite women attended the seminar "to learn firsthand about it," then got together later to discuss their reactions. One participant responds as follows:

Is it possible to say anything more about Total Woman? There are persons who applaud the book - it has saved marriages. There are others who are appalled by what to them appears to be a destruction of personhood. After having read the book and attending the seminar (more or less on assignment) I feel no call to either defend or condemn, but the book has set me thinking.

All marriages need to be cultivated since good intimate relationships do not "just happen." Beyond this fact many marriages today are in serious difficulty. Certainly the response to the book/seminar indicates this. If the book gives the impression of calling on only women to change the situation it should be remembered that the author has chosen to address women who are concerned about the quality of their marriages and want to do something constructive about the situation. (In many cases it may be true that only one person is initially open to this kind of exploration.). Given her chosen format, the person addressed can only be the one who is listening - and in this case it is the woman, not the man.

Beyond this, the book is simple and practical. (This may be more important than first casual reading indicates.) It gives women specific tools and recommends a support system in the form of a buddy. There is encouragement from the experiences of others caught in similar problems, who are realizing success in improved marriages.

While the book can be instructive at some points, for persons who view marriage as partnership, the approach and content remain only partial and call for a wholesome alternative. If

the good news of the Gospel is that man and woman are called-out from a position of domination/submission into one of mutual submission, and exciting time of discovery awaits those who explore together the meaning of this stance. It is at this point that the Total Woman approach becomes only partial. But it may be precisely at this point that a great amount of work needs to be done in terms of conviction and performance.

For the man who has been taught to be aggressive and dominate, the call to love his wife as Christ loved the church comes as a revolutionary stance. What does becoming a servant mean in the marriage relationship?

For the woman who has discovered that the Spirit gives gifts irrespective of sex, a new sense of freedom is born. How can freedom and submission live together?

Perhaps here is where our energies need to be spent, discovering together the meaning of mutual submission.

Elizabeth Bauman
Goshen, Indiana

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HINTS FOR BIG-CITY
JOB-HUNTERS
by Luann Habegger Martin

The December 8, 1975 issue of U.S. News and World Report makes the following assertion: "More and more women are getting college degrees. But large numbers of college-educated women, lacking professional preparation, or trained for overcrowded professions, find themselves working in offices and as retail clerks at low pay."

The truth of this statement became more apparent to me last fall when I began looking for a job. It seemed as though employment agencies noticed only my typing speed and overlooked my five-year-old college diploma, an unused teaching certificate, and nearly four years of administrative experience. I have decided at this point to go to school. If I were to look for a job again, I would do so in a different manner. Perhaps

my observations may help others who are seeking jobs.

1. Newspaper Ads. My first approach was to scour the newspaper for job openings. I dismissed those ads which used such phrases as "glamorous work," "meet famous people," "work for young, talented, exciting lawyer," or "plush office surroundings." The more information the ad gave about the nature of the job, the more attention I paid. I soon learned that when the words "good skills required" or "good typing" appeared at the end of the ad, the job was likely to be mostly secretarial.

2. The Employment Agency. When I spotted a job listing that I wanted to pursue further, I called the agency that had placed the ad. I soon learned that one must go down to the agency in order to gather any additional information. Since the title "administrative assistant" may be given to someone whose major responsibility is typing, I wanted to know if this was the case before spending more time looking into the job. When I asked the person who answered the agency's phone if she could give me a fuller description of the job, she said, "It's a secret. You must come down for an interview." In order to prevent people from going directly to the employer which would mean a lost commission, agencies withhold certain information. At times, they may not know much more about the job than what's listed in the paper. But they can find out.

The employment agencies that I contacted frustrated me. I thought I had made it clear that I was not looking for secretarial work, yet they would call and tell me they had found a "dynamite" job for me. When I kept questioning them about the job, I realized that the bulk of the work would be typing. Perhaps these agencies basically handle clerical and secretarial positions. If I would look for a job again, I would try to find out more about the different kinds of agencies. In some cities there are feminist groups which may be able to recommend various jobs.

3. Goals and Objectives. I think the agencies could have been more helpful to me if I had set for myself job goals and objectives. Some people recommend that resumes be centered around goals and objectives with a section on one's qualifications for the job. This alerts the employer and the agency to one's expectations.

4. The Interview. I really enjoyed one interview. The person I would be replacing joined the employer and me for the interview. I was free to ask her questions about the job. By the end of the interview, I had a clear understanding of what the job would involve, and they knew something about my skills, political orientation, and ideas on office management. Together, the three of us concluded that this was not the job for me. Candor at the time of the interview may avoid misunderstandings later.

5. Salary. When I declined to go to one job interview, the agency asked me how long I had been job hunting. The implication was that if I had looked for any length of time, I wouldn't be so choosy. Because of financial pressure, many women cannot afford to spend weeks and possibly months looking for the "right" job. Since salary was not a primary concern, I had the luxury of being selective. The agencies insisted that I set the minimal wage that I would accept. Women who work full time earn 43% less than men. Would I only be perpetuating this situation if I accepted a salary in the lower brackets? On the other hand, how do we transform a consumer society that judges individual value on the basis of financial worth?

The job hunting process, though frustrating, is often constructive. As I listlessly skimmed the classified ads, I realized that I did not have a focused aim. The process revealed to me something about my own self-concept and awareness, priorities, and attitudes toward money. Maybe the next time I'll even be able to laugh instead of bite my tongue when I take an agency typing test and type these words: "When you go for an interview, be sure there is no dirt under your fingernails."

MORE BOOKS FOR KIDS
WHICH AVOID STEREOTYPES
compiled by Sue Clemmer Steiner

With the exception of the first entry, the books listed here are for readers in the grade 5-7 range. It seems easier to find non-stereotyped heroines than heroes in books at this level; hence most of my selections feature girls.

Free to Be...You and Me by Marlo Thomas and friends. McGraw Hill, \$7.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper.

The compilers call it a "happy hodge-podge" of songs, poems, stories and illustrations. And so it is. One of my favorites—an explanation of how that lady on TV who extols her "soap or detergent or cleaner or cleanser or powder or paste or wax or bleach" is really an actress being paid to say those nice things.

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret by Judy Blume. Bradbury, \$5.75 cloth, \$1.25 paper.

With sensitivity and humour, Judy Blume has captured the joys, feats and uncertainty that surround a young girl approaching adolescence.

Where the Lillies Bloom by Vera and Bill Cleaver. Lippincott, \$5.25 cloth; Signet, \$1.25 paper.

Fourteen-year-old Mary Call Luther schemes to fulfill her dying father's last request--to keep their share-cropper family together and out of the reach of the welfare department.

Sounder by William H. Armstrong. Harper, \$5.75 cloth; \$1.60 paper.

The Man stole a ham to feed his family. The dog Sounder got wounded when the posse came for the man. But somehow the Boy kept his courage and the family together through their ordeal. 1970 Newbery Medal winner.

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell. Houghton Mifflin, \$4.75 cloth; Dell Yearling, \$.95 paper.

Year after year, Karana the Indian girl waits by herself on an island for a ship to come and take her away. But while she waits, she keeps herself alive by building a shelter, making weapons, finding food and fighting off the wild dogs. Based on fact. 1961 Newbery Medal winner.

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RAPE AS POLITICAL CRIME?

Book review by Ruth Yoder Rempel

Rape is not a sex crime. Rape is a political crime: an attempt by men through the exercise of power and violence to control and dominate women. It is not simply the aberrant activity of a "sick mind" It is a conscious, and continual process, by which all men intimidate and humiliate all women. This, essentially, is the thesis of Susan Brownmiller in her controversial book, Against Our Will: Men Women and Rape (Simon & Schuster).

At least one half of her book is concerned with tracing the appearance of rape in wars. Here, Brownmiller uses extensive documentation to support her thesis that rape is essentially an act of power to prove dominance. Women, she suggests, are the ones who suffer most in war, often serving as targets for savage rape. Rape generally appears during war as the "right" of the conquering troops. These troops make clear their victory or stamp their new property with their mark. Rape of women, as the prize property of the retreating troops, becomes the ultimate proof of the superiority and power of the conquerors, and the final humiliation of the retreating forces. Rape is frequent even when prostitution is prevalent and sex is easy to have.

Further, the use of rape for punishment and control (again an act of power and dominance) has appeared in many forms. Early Assyrian civilization allowed a man whose virgin daughter was raped to

gain justice by raping the attacker's wife. Missourians gang-raped Mormon women in order to drive the group out of the state in 1838. More recently, American bike and youth gangs have used rape as standard punishment for infractions by females.

Homosexual prison rapes give further evidence for Brownmiller's thesis that rape is essentially an act of power rather than of sex. Even in prison situations where sex with visiting wives and friends is permitted, rape continues.

Pornography, comic books, and love magazines that portray the rapist as a handsome and vigorous hero and the victim as a woman of questionable character perpetuate the myths surrounding rape. Myths such as the assumption that crying "rape" is the vengeful act of a scorned woman (Potipher's wife), or that the rape victim is a woman who 'changed her mind' the next day, or that 'she asked for it' - that somehow the guilt lies with the woman - are fed by these sources.

Although her book clearly indicates Brownmiller's desire to avoid getting caught in the bog of well-publicized arguments of the broader radical-feminist concerns, she does speak briefly to some of these. On monogamy, her thesis leans heavily on her theory that all long-term, sexually exclusive relationships between men and women (i.e. marriage) historically originate in women's fear of rape. These relationships were initially formed as "protective bonding." Fear of rape, rather than a natural tendency toward monogamy, motherhood, or love is what originally led women to strike a bargain with men whereby she received protection against other men, and he benefitted by equal convenience.

This, I feel, is her shakiest point, and, unfortunately, lies at the heart of her argument. Brownmiller has severely weakened her thesis by building its base on the foundation that all sexually exclusive relationships are based on fear; and expanding on that, that these relationships would be undesirable if they were no longer

necessary for protection.

What follows is again on safer ground. From that day on, rape came to be seen essentially as a crime against the male. Women became property to be bought and sold (bride price), or stolen or violated in acts directed not against her, but against her protector. Rape entered the law as a property crime, and has remained there. Rape laws continue to treat rape as a violation of male rights of possession.

Ms. Brownmiller's position on prostitution is surprisingly conservative. Legalized prostitution, she points out, does not function as a deterrent to rape, but further institutionalizes the idea that sex is a man's right, a service or commodity that can be bought, that should not be denied to one willing to pay. The elimination of prostitution will only take place, when "the men who create the demand, and not the women who supply it, are fully prosecuted under law."

Brownmiller avoids getting into a debate on what is a woman's best defense against rape, although she does make it clear that she feels social conditioning has left women far from adequately prepared to deal with physical attack and violence. But rather than stress individual responsibility for adequate knowledge of self-defense techniques, she urges society as a whole to act against this crime.

As long as rape laws remain unchanged, as long as the media and individuals continue to place the onus on women to protect themselves and to make certain they have taken all necessary precautions - women will continue to be raped: raped of their freedom to live without fear, raped of their opportunity to have the personal freedom, independence, and self-assurance of men, raped of their mental and emotional health.

Currently, rape laws are such that juries generally serve as allies for the defense. Women are very unlikely to win a conviction. The myth that the victim has somehow provoked and (accepted) the rape is still very much alive. Clear proof of "adequate resistance" is extremely important if

a conviction is to be won. Rape is the only crime of violence where proof of resistance is so necessary.

Brownmiller therefore makes a number of very concrete and direct suggestions for ways of dealing more adequately with the crime of rape. These include: 1) assuring that at least 50% of the power to enforce law and maintain order is in the hands of women. This includes police and army positions, attorneys, etc. 2) The crime of rape must be separated from all traditional concepts of chastity. A women's past history of sexual activity with anyone other than the defendant should not be admissible as evidence in court. 3) Standards of resistance or consent do not accurately gauge a victim's terror. As is the case with other crimes, the victim's complaint must be accepted at face value. 4) Sentencing should depend on the severity of the crime, ranging from 6 months to 20 years.

Brownmiller's book does not come across as an "angry" or reactionary statement. It cannot be easily dismissed. It is extremely thorough, extensively researched and carefully documented.

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JUST OUT!!!

To See Ourselves: Five Views on Canadian Women. ed. Shirley T. Popham, Information Canada, 1975. Paper. \$7.50 Canada, \$9.00 U.S.

A well-designed large-format paperback with essays on five "classes" of Canadian women: 1) non-professional working woman, 2) homemaker, 3) professional working woman, 4) disadvantaged woman, 5) the young woman. The authors, all women themselves, combine statistical data with telling interviews of women in each of these situations. The book concludes with a 60-page photo essay by four Canadian women photographers.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Portable Herstory: A Documentary Exhibit of our American Foremothers

Consists of 16 frames plus one introductory frame, each presenting the story of an American woman. The text deals with each woman's life and work with attention to the theme of how religious faith functioned in her life. For more information write Diane Miller, PORTABLE HERSTORY, 195 Upland Road, Cambridge, MA. 02140. Cost includes a \$30.00 non-refundable reservation fee and a \$70.00 per week hanging fee.

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FILMS

Men's Lives, 45 minutes.

Excellent study of the limiting "boxes" North American society forces its men into. Available through Commission on Education, General Conference Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas.

Feminism in the Church, U.S., colour, 30 minutes.

Emphasizes new attitudes towards women in the church and investigates what has been happening in two US churches with women pastors. Mass Media Ministries, 2116 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 61303

A group of short films about working mothers, 1975, colour.

The series of eight films is excellent for discussion groups. The films are of interest to all women, not just those who work outside the home, to husbands and to all parents and older children. National Film Board of Canada, Box 6100, Montreal, Quebec.

WANTED - SPEAKERS

The Task Force is compiling a list of available speakers on topics related to women's concerns.

If you have any names to suggest of people who are good resource people or speakers for various kinds of functions, please send the names to this paper along with a brief description of the person - qualifications, interests, suitable for what kind of audience (congregation, lectures, retreats, etc.).

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SHOULD PROFESSIONALS MEET?

Some women have expressed interest in a seminar for professional Mennonite women. Would you like to see such an idea developed? What aspects should be emphasized? send your ideas to us.

ATTENTION CREATIVE WRITERS

We would welcome your writing and poetry for this newsletter. Many of you out there are expressing your feelings and ideas on paper. Care to share them with us?

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PLEASE RESPOND

We would like to hear from our readers. Take time to write a letter responding to articles and issues. Perhaps you have ideas for further newsletters or for issues the Task Force should be working on. We welcome you to share your concerns with us.

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ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Task Force Newsletter
c/o Margaret L. Reimer
Conrad Grebel College
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6

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